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ABSTRACT

Many non-speech faculty lack adequate training in oral communication instruction, thus creating a major obstacle to developing programs of oral communication across the curriculum (OCXC). OCXC programs have attempted to ameliorate this problem by providing training programs or consulting/training (CONTRA) programs for non-speech faculty. The Training Model attempts to teach non-speech faculty to conduct oral communication activities in their classes. The CONTRA model (already adapted at Radford University and the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs) combines the Training Model with direct instruction and evaluation by speech communication experts. While the Training Model enables the application of OCXC at institutions with small or nonexistent speech departments, it provides such limited knowledge that non-speech faculty are neither competent to provide oral communication training, nor to design or evaluate activities. Compared to the Training Model, the CONTRA Model provides for superior design, implementation, and evaluation of oral communication activities, because it ensures that both the students and the non-speech faculty get some training and evaluation from experts. The CONTRA Model, however, cannot be implemented without sufficient speech communication faculty, and may entail the willingness to work without additional compensation, and to accept the goals of OCXC. Although the CONTRA Model is theoretically preferable, the theoretical advantages and disadvantages of the two models are yet to be examined in controlled comparative studies. In addition, many institutions lack the resources to implement the CONTRA Model. Institutions must decide whether it is better to use the Training Model than to offer no OCXC program at all. (Twenty references are attached.) (PRA)

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A Comparative Analysis of Training Models versus Consulting/Training Models for Implementing Oral Communication Across the Curriculum

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A Comparative Analysis of Training Models versus Consulting/Training Models for Implementing Oral Communication Across the Curriculum

ABSTRACT

Many non-speech faculty lack adequate training in oral communication instruction, thus creating a major obstacle to developing programs of oral communication across the curriculum (OCXC). This paper examines the advantages, disadvantages, and preliminary assessments of the training model and the consulting/training model approaches to overcoming this obstacle in OCXC programs.

Programs of OCXC are designed to improve teaching/learning by (a) providing programming, facilities, and professional expertise to help improve students' oral communication skills and (b) supporting and facilitating the incorporation of oral communication activities to enhance learning of course content across the curriculum. The rationale for an OCXC emphasis (Cronin, 1990; Cronin & Glenn, 1990a, 1990b; Hay, 1988; Roberts, 1983, 1984; Steinfatt, 1986) is based on the fact that most college students are not provided sufficient structured practice with competent evaluation to refine and reinforce their oral communication skills in courses across the curriculum and thus graduate with inadequate oral communication skills. Carefully designed assignments and constructive feedback can provide students with multiple opportunities to practice and improve speaking and listening skills in a variety of content areas. Furthermore, oral communication activities represent a fundamental mode of learning (Modaff & Hopper, 1984; Steinfatt, 1986). Educators should expand the application of meaningful oral communication activities to allow students to take a more active role in mastering and communicating course content, thus enhancing classroom learning across the curriculum.

Many non-speech faculty participants in OCXC programs lack sufficient prior academic training to design, implement, and evaluate oral communication activities effectively (Hay, 1988). For example, faculty who know little about debate may find it

difficult to design debate activities for their classes. Likewise, faculty with little academic training in public speaking may be unable to instruct their students in effective public speaking or to provide meaningful evaluations of such activities.

OCXC programs have attempted to ameliorate this problem by providing training programs or consulting/training (CONTRA) programs for non-speech faculty. This paper will describe the training and the CONTRA models, examine their advantages and disadvantages, and discuss preliminary assessments of each.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MODELS

The Training Model

Most of the approximately 25 institutions with established OCXC programs have adopted the training model (Cronin & Grice, 1990). Although the breadth and depth of training varies, this approach attempts to provide instruction to non-speech faculty in the skills necessary to conduct oral communication activities in their classes. Workshops, seminars, and/or retreats are conducted to provide instruction to non-speech faculty in oral communication theory, oral communication skills, application of oral communication activities in their classes, evaluation of oral communication activities, support services available for OCXC instruction, and revisions of course syllabi to include oral communication assignments (Weiss, 1990). These non-speech faculty then conduct oral communication activities in their

communication-intensive (C-I) courses without the direct involvement of speech communication faculty. Likewise, students in these courses have no direct contact with speech communication faculty except in the few institutions providing a faculty-staffed speech lab to assist students with their speech activities/problems. Although the speech lab is a welcome addition, it does not directly involve speech faculty in C-I course activities.

The CONTRA Model

OCXC programs at Radford University and the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs have adopted the CONTRA model (Cronin & Grice, 1990). This approach combines the oral communication instruction provided non-speech faculty in the training model with the provision of consultants from the speech communication faculty to work with C-I course instructors in designing, implementing, and evaluating oral communication activities in their courses. Communication faculty work with C-I course instructors in designing the oral communication activities that are most appropriate for accomplishing the goals of each assignment. Communication faculty provide live or videotaped lectures and handout material on the oral communication skills required to accomplish each activity. They are available to help students prepare and rehearse for oral communication activities, to observe and evaluate the oral communication activities conducted in each C-I course, and to help C-I instructors modify

oral communication activities for future applications.

Unlike the training model, the CONTRA model involves direct instruction in oral communication and evaluation of students' oral communication activities by speech communication experts. At Radford, the CONTRA model also includes interactive video instruction in oral communication and a peer tutoring laboratory. Interactive video instruction modules have been (or will be) developed to help students with speech fright, introductions, conclusions, speaking outlines, developing key ideas, listening, debate, oral communication in parent-teacher conferences, interviewing, and discussion. These modules provide self-paced individualized instruction in oral communication. Trained student assistants are available during and after the interactive video instruction to help students apply this training to their specific needs. In the peer tutoring laboratory, graduate and undergraduate speech communication majors are trained in tutoring and work under the direct supervision of the Coordinator of the Oral Communication Program (Grice, Bird, & Dalton, 1990). The peer tutors offer assistance to students in C-I courses, given instructor permission, in preparing, practicing, and revising their oral communication assignments.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE MODELS

Both the training and CONTRA models have advantages over no training. Even the training model provides <u>some</u> training to non-speech faculty in designing, implementing, and evaluating oral

communication activities in their C-I courses. In addition, both models can make non-speech faculty more aware of the literature and available resources in oral communication instruction and the value of such instruction. The decision to adopt one particular model will depend on the program's philosophy and resources.

Advantages Of The Training Model Over The CONTRA Model

1. It enables the application of OCXC in many courses throughout the university without major strains on the speech communication department and/or on the university budget (i.e., hiring additional speech faculty or compensating speech communication faculty for their additional workload).
2. It enables the implementation of OCXC at institutions with small or nonexistent speech departments. If these OCXC programs demonstrate their value, they may gain sufficient support from the institution or outside agencies to enable more direct involvement by speech communication faculty.

Disadvantages Of The Training Model

Non-speech faculty, even after receiving oral communication training via a workshop or retreat, are usually:

1. not competent to provide oral communication training to their students,
2. not competent to design oral communication activities that would be most helpful to students in their C-I courses,
3. not competent to evaluate the oral communication component of activities in their C-I courses, and

4. not competent to assist their students in preparing, rehearsing, and revising oral communication activities.

Thus, the training model provides only a little knowledge about oral communication to non-speech faculty, and this could prove to be a dangerous thing. For example, non-speech faculty conducting C-I courses may offer erroneous or superficial oral communication instruction to their students. Furthermore, their evaluations of oral communication activities may be unintentionally harmful if they, for example, lack knowledge or sensitivity in coping with speech fright or give improper advice on how to prepare and rehearse for oral communication activities. In addition, the training model:

5. may create the unintended perception among non-speech faculty trainees that speech communication is "essentially" devoid of content and that little academic preparation is necessary to provide adequate instruction in speech communication (Mix, 1987),

6. may encourage universities to attempt to "satisfy" accreditation requirements for oral communication training with no provision of direct instruction in oral communication from speech communication experts (Palmerton, 1988), and

7. provides for no direct observation of oral communication activities in C-I courses by speech communication experts. Furthermore, many training models fail to provide on-going instruction in oral communication for the C-I instructors (Hay, 1988; Weiss, 1990). These deficiencies increase the possibility

that oral communication activities will be perfunctory and limit the opportunity for improved pedagogical applications of oral communication activities in future courses.

Advantages Of The CONTRA Model Over The Training Model

1. It ensures that students in C-I courses receive training in oral communication skills from speech communication experts. Even though such training is necessarily limited, it is preferable to having non-speech faculty provide such training, and it better prepares students to engage in oral communication activities in C-I courses.

2. It provides the opportunity for each C-I instructor to work with a speech communication expert in planning the oral communication activities to be used in that course. At Radford, this approach often results in the refinement of proposed oral communication activities to better accomplish instructional goals.

3. It allows speech communication experts to evaluate the oral communication activities in each C-I course. For example, an expert in debate may assist the C-I instructor in evaluating student debates in a labor problems class, or an expert in public speaking may assist a marketing professor in evaluating oral presentations of final projects in a marketing research class.

When compared with the training model, the CONTRA model provides for superior design, implementation, and evaluation of oral communication activities in OCXC programs. A speech

communication instructor trained for one week in biology would be unlikely to provide quality instruction in "biology across the curriculum." Why should non-speech faculty receiving limited training in oral communication be any better equipped to offer a pedagogically sound approach to OCXC? In addition:

4. It may encourage students in C-I courses to seek additional training by enrolling in courses in speech. Although this outcome has been observed with the training model (Madsen, 1984; Roberts, 1983), the CONTRA model should produce increased demand for speech courses from C-I students as a result of their direct contact with speech communication faculty.

5. It may stimulate collaborative multi-disciplinary research as a result of the team approach to OCXC. For example, Radford communication faculty have teamed with professors of education, marketing, and psychology in producing papers accepted for annual meetings of the ICA, SCA, and SSCA.

6. If, absent a required speech course, OCXC is used to satisfy accreditation requirements for training in oral communication[1], application of the CONTRA model ensures student exposure to at least some direct instruction from experts in speech communication. Furthermore, application of this model reduces the likelihood that non-speech faculty will design assessment measures for oral communication skills competency in C-I courses. The responsibility for designing such assessment, mandated by some accrediting agencies, is likely to be given to speech

communication faculty--if they are directly involved in C-I courses.

7. It may enhance the credibility of the department of speech communication within the university. Non-speech faculty working directly with communication consultants may gain increased appreciation of the need for oral communication training and the academic preparation and skills required to be an effective oral communication instructor.

8. It may increase employment opportunities for speech communication professionals as demand grows for additional speech faculty to act as C-I consultants in OCXC programs.

9. It moves the speech communication discipline to the forefront of the movement to improve instruction throughout higher education. It may enable C-I instructors to improve their teaching as they work with speech communication consultants (Weiss, 1990). It also provides for the direct involvement of speech communication faculty in facilitating continued oral communication education of students after they leave speech classes.

Disadvantages Of The CONTRA Model

1. It cannot be implemented without sufficient speech communication faculty willing to provide assistance. Even if speech communication faculty are willing to serve as consultants to C-I courses, the number of such courses is severely limited by the number of available consultants. Institutions with few (or

no) speech communication faculty cannot implement this model.

2. It may entail additional uncompensated service from speech communication consultants if no reassigned time or overload pay is available to faculty providing such services. Radford speech communication faculty volunteers average 15 hours per semester of C-I course consultation in addition to teaching four classes per semester.

3. It may not meet the professional goals of speech communication faculty providing such services. This is a service function that may not receive adequate recognition in the university or the communication profession.

4. Speech consultants may be unwilling to adapt to the goals and limits of OCXC. The primary goal of OCXC is to use oral communication activities to enhance learning of course content. Although a concomitant goal is to enhance students' oral communication skills, the amount and depth of oral communication training in C-I courses are severely limited. Speech communication faculty may feel that too few class periods are available to train students in the skills necessary to conduct oral communication activities in C-I courses. Furthermore, speech communication faculty may resist the primary emphasis on using oral communication activities to enhance learning of course content. For example, in evaluating student debates on contemporary issues of marketing, C-I course instructors would be primarily interested in critiques focusing on knowledge of

marketing issues; however, communication consultants may wish to emphasize students' speaking skills and debate strategies in their critiques.

ASSESSMENT OF THE MODELS[2]

Applications of the CONTRA model in OCXC programs are quite new. No assessments have been reported to date at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. However, preliminary assessments of outcomes at Radford are encouraging. Self-report data from approximately 1,500 students (Spring, 1989- Spring, 1991) reveal that most students enjoy participating in oral communication activities and rate such activities as good or excellent. Most students also feel that such activities should be included in courses, that these courses are better due to the inclusion of oral communication activities, and that their oral communication competence and their understanding of course content are improved through participation in C-I courses (Cronin & Glenn, 1990a). Although valid as indicators of self-perceived attitudes and predispositions, self-reports provide inadequate measures of students' learning and communication skills (McCroskey, 1986; Rubin & Graham, 1988). Independent measures of actual learning or skill improvement should be included in OCXC assessment strategies.

A quasi-experimental pilot study (Cronin & King, 1991) reported that oral communication training appears to produce clearer/better organized and longer student presentations of

research proposals in experimental psychology as compared to presentations by students in the same sections who did not receive training in oral communication. A second quasi-experimental study comparing control, interactive video instruction (IVI), and lecture/linear video instruction groups found that IVI appeared to be as effective as lecture/linear video instruction in training students to cope with speech fright. Students trained via IVI showed significantly greater cognitive recall/application than students in the control group on both immediate and delayed tests (Cronin & Stahl, 1991).

Self-report data generally indicate that most students perceive that their communication skills (Palmerton, 1988; Roberts, 1983) and understanding of course content (Palmerton, 1988) are enhanced as a result of oral communication activities conducted via the training model. However, no direct independent measures comparing learning outcomes associated with the CONTRA model versus the training model have been reported. Indirect comparisons of learning outcomes from application of a training model at one institution with application of a CONTRA model at a different institution are of limited value due to the uncontrolled variables involved in such comparisons.

CONCLUSION

The CONTRA model is theoretically preferable to the training model as a method of implementing programs of OCXC in higher education. However, the theoretical advantages and disadvantages

of the CONTRA model versus the training model are yet to be examined in controlled comparative studies. Furthermore, many institutions lack the resources to implement the CONTRA model even if speech communication faculty in those institutions were willing to serve as consultants for C-I courses. Absent such research and sufficient numbers of speech communication faculty to implement the CONTRA model, is it better to use the training model to support OCXC than it is to offer no program of OCXC at all? Should programs using the training model be encouraged to include peer tutoring and interactive video instruction in oral communication even if they cannot include all aspects of the CONTRA model?

NOTES

[1] The authors oppose the use of OCXC to satisfy accreditation requirements for oral communication competence absent a required speech course. See Cronin and Grice, in press, for a detailed discussion of accreditation issues relevant to OCXC programs.

[2] See Cronin and Glenn, in press, for a more detailed description and analysis of assessments of learning outcomes of OCXC programs.

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